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ABSTRACT

To model collaboration and to "practice what we teach," a group of faculty members at McNeese State University in Louisiana developed a college-wide theme based on the book, "Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes." This book was selected because of the importance of seeking and achieving peace in a world that is struggling and, seemingly, losing the battle to establish peaceful environments for children and adults. In the book the heroine, Sadako, is dying of leukemia as a result of radiation from the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima (Japan) when she was two years old. Sadako learned that by folding a thousand paper cranes she might be cured of the disease. Multiple copies of the book and of relevant videos were ordered for the curriculum materials center. Each instructor electing to participate in the project centered a portion of his or her instruction around the book. The final goal was to have at least one thousand paper cranes hanging in the education building by the end of the semester. The book was utilized in various ways in courses teaching remedial reading, content area reading, social studies methods, and mathematics methods. The interdisciplinary challenge of developing a unit focusing on peace is enhanced by the availability of materials on the Internet. The educators felt a responsibility to foster peace within their classrooms. (BT)

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Peace Crane Project: An Interdisciplinary Approach

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McNeese State University May 1999

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McNeese State University May 1999

In an effort to model collaboration and to "practice what we teach," a group of faculty members at McNeese State University developed a college-wide theme based on the book, Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes by Eleanor Coerr. This particular title was selected because of the importance of seeking and achieving peace in a world that is struggling and, seemingly, losing the battle to establish peaceful environments for children and adults.

Sadako was a heroine in Japan who exhibited courage as she was dying of leukemia. The disease was a result of radiation from the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima when Sadako was two years old. She learned that by folding a thousand paper cranes, she might be cured of the dreaded disease. As one can well see, the teaching strategies that can be developed are numerous.

How did we establish a group of faculty willing to work on the project? Collaboration at the university level takes some skillful planning and time management. However, the rewards of such a project have reaped many benefits for the students and the faculty. Initial meetings included the Director of the Curriculum Materials Center, who was responsible for ordering multiple copies of SADAKO AND THE THOUSAND PAPER CRANES for check-out purposes for students and faculty. She also "surfed the net" to find ideas associated with and supporting the issue of peace education. Copies were distributed to all interested faculty. Videos entitled SADAKO AND THE THOUSAND PAPER CRANES and HOW TO FOLD A PAPER CRANE

were ordered from Informed Democracy. Each instructor electing to participate in the "Paper Crane" project was asked to center a portion of his/her instruction during the semester around the book. Issues of peace in our world, the historical and multicultural aspects of the theme, and the literary value of the book were all areas of interest. The final goal of the faculty was to have at least one thousand paper cranes hanging in the education building (Farrar Hall) by the end of the semester. A wide variety of teaching ideas to enhance methods courses was exhibited.

The Paper Crane Project presented an excellent opportunity for senior education majors in Diagnostic and Remedial Reading in the Elementary School to apply a readability formula to the book Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes. As a way of learning to apply the formula, transparencies were prepared from the beginning, middle, and end of the book. The class examined the passages of 100 words each and counted the number of syllables and sentences in each. An average of three passages was obtained in order to establish a readability level for the book. Students then evaluated the reading level and made a decision about how to use the book with the student they were currently tutoring. Some decided that their students could read the book, while others could use it best by reading it to their students and then discussing details and main ideas. The objective of this activity was for new teachers to learn to apply a readability formula in order to find a match between text material and reading level of students being taught.

In another reading content course, the faculty member utilized the ideas from the Paper Crane Project by reminding students that reading can be approached from an efferent or aesthetic perspective. A discussion followed that stressed that good literature, reflecting the latter perspective, should always be incorporated in the teaching of content materials. Doing so

facilitates both comprehension and retention, while enriching learning. Examples of incorporating literature into each of the content areas were given to include a thorough discussion of use of literature in the social sciences. As an additional tie with peace issues, when teaching and learning about the Holocaust, the significant role the Diary of Anne Frank played was discussed.

In the social studies methods courses, the idea that many social studies concepts can be developed through the use of good children's literature was explored. After sharing the book Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes, a correlation was made using the National Council for Social Studies' Standards and Performance Expectations. Discussion was generated that listed how research, discussion and/or activities could be determined when utilizing the book Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes. A variety of ideas for incorporating the Peace Crane project in the social studies realm can be explored by contacting the addresses listed in the attached RESOURCES LIST. There are a number of educational resources that can be obtained from Informed Democracy. Additionally, the Internet has a diversity of articles, ideas, and addresses for incorporating the issues of peace and Paper Crane projects into the classroom.

In the math methods course, where the project began as a way to incorporate multi-cultural aspects, students studied the geometry of folding the paper cranes. Near the end of the project, the students collected data from each of the course sections about how many cranes had been folded. They examined the data for measures of central tendency and considered ways to help elementary pupils learn the construction and interpretation of various kinds of graphs. The project culminated with the stringing of folded cranes by tens for ease of counting and displaying, and with the actual construction of several types of graphs.

The issues of peace are more timely than ever before in our society. We must face the fact that our society is in turmoil. As educators, we have an awesome responsibility to foster peace within our classrooms and our schools. The interdisciplinary challenge of developing a unit focusing on peace is greatly enhanced by the availability of materials on the Internet. Hopefully, the attached RESOURCES LIST will assist in beginning a project that could impact the school environment in any school setting.

RESOURCES LIST

Coer, E. (1977). Sadako and the thousand paper cranes. New York, New York: Dell.

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (1994). Washington, D.C.: National Council for the Social Studies.

Garden of Origami, (Online). (1998). Available: http://ccwf.cc.utexas.edu/~vbeatty/origami/gate2.html

Informed Democracy: Educational Resources: 1-800-827-0949
E-Mail: garden@sadako

Levenson, G. (1993). *On the Educational benefits of origami.* Santa Cruz, CA: Informed Democracy.

Nesbitt, D. (1998) Hiroshima: *A city with peace as its purposes.* Social Studies and the Young Learner, 10 (3), 21-23.

Sadako Peace Club for Children, PO Box 1253, Issaquah, WA 98027-1253 USA
E-mail:sadakoclub@sadako.org

Videos:

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes. (Informed Democracy)
How to Fold a Paper Crane (Informed Democracy)